

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please replace the claims, including all prior versions, with the listing of claims below.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method~~Method~~ for fabricating a semiconductor structure ~~having the steps of, comprising:~~

- providing a semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~;
- providing a plurality of trenches ~~(G11, G12; G21)~~ in the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ using a first hard mask ~~(50)~~, which trenches are arranged offset with respect to one another in rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ and columns ~~(s1, s2, s3)~~;
- causing the hard mask ~~(50)~~ to recede by a predetermined distance ~~(Δ)~~ with respect to ~~the~~ trench wall at ~~the~~ top side ~~(OS)~~ of the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ for ~~the purpose of forming~~ a first hard mask ~~(50')~~ that has been caused to recede;
- providing an isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ in the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~ using a second hard mask ~~(HM)~~, the isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ subdividing the first hard mask ~~(50')~~ that has been caused to recede along the rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ into strip sections ~~(50₁', 50₂', 50₃')~~ and the strip sections ~~(50₁', 50₃')~~ of adjacent rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ being arranged offset with respect to one another;
- the receding process resulting in a reduction of an overlap region ~~(KB')~~ between two strip sections ~~(50₁', 50₃')~~ of adjacent rows ~~(r1, r2)~~ in comparison with an overlap region ~~(KB)~~ which would be present without the receding process;
- removing the second hard mask ~~(HM)~~; and
- filling and planarizing the isolation trench structure ~~(ST)~~ with a filling material ~~(FI)~~ using the first hard mask ~~(50')~~ subdivided into the strip sections ~~(50₁', 50₂', 50₃')~~.

2. (Currently amended) The method~~Method~~ according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that wherein~~ the trenches ~~(G11, G12; G21)~~ each have a trench capacitor with a corresponding filling ~~(20)~~, which is sunk with respect to the top side ~~(OS)~~ of the semiconductor substrate ~~(10)~~.

3. (Currently amended) ~~The method~~Method according to claim 1 ~~or 2, characterized in that~~wherein the receding process is realized by an isotropic, preferably wet-chemical, etching process, as a result of which ~~the~~a thickness of the first hard mask (~~50~~) that has been caused to recede is reduced in comparison with ~~the~~a thickness of the hard mask (~~50~~).
4. (Currently amended) ~~The method~~Method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the first hard mask (~~50~~) is composed of silicon nitride.
5. (Currently amended) ~~The method~~Method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the second hard mask (~~HM~~) is composed of silicon oxide.
6. (Currently amended) ~~The method~~Method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the filling material (~~FI~~) is composed of silicon oxide.
7. (Currently amended) ~~The method~~Method according to ~~one of the preceding claims, characterized in that~~claim 1, wherein the receding process results in complete elimination of an overlap region (~~KB~~) between two strip sections (~~50₁'~~, ~~50₃'~~) of adjacent rows (~~r1~~, ~~r2~~).